

In the Claims

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently amended) A panel element comprising: having a utilization side (11), a counter draw (12) opposite the utilization side (11), a first side (13) having a tongue (2), a second side (14) which is located opposite the first side (13) and has a groove (3) with a contour opposite to that of the tongue (2), the tongue (2) having a connecting element (4) which extends substantially normal to the utilization side (11) and whose cross-section has a first flank (41) and a second flank (42) opposite the first flank (41), the cross-section of the connecting element (4) having a first section and a second section essentially parallel to the plane of the utilization side, wherein the first section is positioned near the utilization side and the second section positioned below the first section and having a center line (44) normal to the utilization side (11) and - viewed in the direction of utilization side (11) - the inclination of the first flank (41) and the second flank (42) each points from the center line (44) outwards in the ~~a~~ the first section (45) of the connecting element (4) and in a ~~the~~ second section (46) the inclination of the first flank (41) points from the center line (44) outwards and the inclination of the second flank (42) points to the center line (44), the distance normal to the center line (44) being reduced between the first flank (41) and second flank (42), characterized in that the first flank (41) is arranged on the side facing away from the panel element of connecting element (4).
2. (Currently amended) The panel element according to claim 1, wherein characterized in that the inclination of the first flank (41) and the inclination of the second flank (42) are substantially constant in the first section (45).
3. (Currently amended) The panel element according to claim 2, wherein characterized in that ~~in the first section (45)~~ the first flank (41) has an angle inclination smaller in the first section than that of the second flank (42) in the first section.
4. (Currently amended) The panel element according to claim 2, wherein any one of claims 2 and 3, characterized in that the inclination of the first flank (41) is substantially constant in the second section (46) and commensurates with the inclination of the first flank (41) in the first section (45).

5. (Currently amended) The panel element according to claim 1, wherein any one of claims 1 to 4, characterized in that the second flank (42) is rounded in the second section (46).

6. (Currently amended) The panel element according to claim 1, wherein the any one of claims 1 to 5, characterized in that groove (3) has a recess (5) with a contour opposite to that of the connecting element (4) and, when groove (3) is connected with tongue (2) of another similar panel element, a first contact point (61) is formed on the first flank (41) of the connecting element (4) and a second contact point (62) is formed on the second flank (42) of the connecting element (4) essentially opposite to the first contact point.

7. (Currently amended) The panel element according to claim 6, characterized in that a glue channel (71) is formed in the recess of the groove on a surface of the recess parallel to the counter draw side, region facing the counter draw (12) of recess (5).

8. (Currently amended) The panel element according to claim 1, wherein any one of claims 1 to 7, characterized in that the groove (3) further comprises has a glue channel (72), and wherein the glue channel (72) is an undercut adjacent and parallel to the utilization side and is positioned opposite to as an section bordering on the face side (21) of tongue (2) of the other similar panel element when groove (3) is connected with tongue (2) of the other similar panel element.

9. (Currently amended) The panel element according to claim 8, any one of claims 6 to 8, characterized in that wherein when the tongue of one panel (3) is connected with the groove (2) of another similar panel element - a continuous gap (8) is formed adjacent to at least a section of the second side, extending between tongue (2) of the other similar panel element and groove (3) up to the second contact point (62) has been formed in the region of the face side (31) of groove (3).

10. (Currently amended) The panel element according to claim 9, wherein any one of claims 1 to 9, characterized in that vertical sides and sides perpendicular thereto of the panel element (13, 14, 15, 16) are at least partially treated, in particular sprayed, coated or the like, with a hydrophobic agent.

11. (New) An interlocking floor system comprising at least two panel elements, wherein a panel element comprises:

a utilization side;

a counter draw side opposite to the utilization side;

a first side essentially normal to the utilization side, wherein the first side comprises a tongue positioned near the utilization side and extending beyond the counter draw side;

a second side which is located opposite the first side, wherein the second side comprises a groove positioned near the counter draw side, and wherein the groove extends beyond the utilization side and includes a contour opposite to that of the tongue;

wherein the tongue comprises a connecting element which extends vertically away from the utilization side and substantially normal to the utilization side; wherein the connecting element has a cross-section comprising:

- a first flank positioned near the first side and a second flank that is positioned opposite the first flank;
- a first section and a second section that are essentially parallel to the plane of the utilization side and extend between the first and second flanks, wherein the first section is positioned near the utilization side and the second section is positioned near the first section; and
- a center line normal to the utilization side,

and wherein in the first section the distance from the center line to the first flank is less than the distance from the center line to the second flank, and wherein in the second section, the distance from the center line to the first flank gradually increases at a constant angle while the distance from the center line to the second flank gradually decreases on an arcuating incline.

12. (New) The interlocking floor system according to claim 11, wherein in the first section the distance from the center line to the first flank is increasing and the distance from the center line to the second flank is increasing.